Saturday, Aug 4, 1945

Lew White-----J. L. Burkeys
Dear Folks, aff:

First I want to apologize for having to make a carbon copy of this for one of you, but I just finished a very long letter to Bob, Dick and Ben and I must get back to the house very shortly.

The information we have given you concerning Dad has been so sketchy that I felt sure you would like to hear from us. I wish that, after reading this, you would forward it along to the various members of the family on your respective sides of the house.

Harold Aull and his wife had come up from Tucumcari and they with John and Doris planned to spend the week at Aspen on a short vacation. They had planned to leave Wednesday morning and since we had an order for quite a bit of inch lumber (which had to be planed) we decided that Dad and Billie Watkins could run the planer Wednesday. Tuesday nite I went over the planer carefully, put sharp knives on and then Dad and I ran 30 or 40 boards to be sure that ev rything was in good working order. It ran just fine and just before dark I closed it down and Dad and I went thru the whole operation.....me telling him how to feed a board etc. Wednesday morning after John left I sent Billie out to the house (where we have the planer) told him about starting up etc. However, I was a little anxious about them running it so didn't let Billie leave until about eleven. That way, I figured that they could run about an hour.....and then when I went home to lunch I could check and see how they were getting along. If they were having trouble I'd stop them andif they were getting along O.K. they could run that afternoon.

Our yard man had come to work sick Wednesday morning so when 12:00 O'clock came I insisted that he eat first while I stayed at the yard. He said he couldn't eat, but would like to get some orange juice and rest for an hour. Well, they called about 12:30 and said that the planer had hurt Dad (they didn't think seriously) and that they had shut down. I hurried out at one O'clock and he was on the bed.....looking like hell. When they called the first thing to enter my mind was that he had been cut, but when they said that it had thrown a board back at him I didn't feel that it could be very serious. However, the doctor had been there before I got home.....I took one lookand told Mildred to call the ambulance. I immeaditely called the doctor back.....and made arrangments for Dad at the hospital. The ambulance came and tookhe and mother up about 2:30. They immeaditely X-rayed him and started taking blood counts every hour. The X-rays showed nothing and that evening he quit spitting up blood,but was still sick at his stomach and was belching a lot. The doctors (two of them) said that the blood count was dropping (a good sign) his temperature was almost normal and they seemed to think it was more or less shock. One leg had been numb and feeling was returning to it.

Ten thirty Wednesday nite (John came back at once) the doctors told both John and I that they felt he would be O.K. Said he was in the hospital.....that they would continue to take blood counts throughout the nite and could operate if necessary within 30 minutes.

Mother stayed with him that nite and Mildred was up there about ten o'clock and he joked with her and she came back out to the house much encouraged. (I was out there unloading lumber) Even mother thot he was much better. An X-ray at 11:00 thursday morning showed a bubble in the upper chest cavity and an hour later another showed his stomach crowding one lung and his heart. Breathing was much more difficult. Mother went home to bathe between 12:00 and 1:00 while John stayed with him and when I went by the hospital at 1:30 the doctor said that they must operate. They gave blood-plasma and put him on the table. Worked for over an hour, but he was barely breathing when they wheeled him back to his room. He passed away without ever regaining consciousness at 4:30

He told me that the whole accident was just "damned carlessness, that he knew better" However, neither John nor I can feel that way about it. It was a mistake to let him try to run alone.

Mother felt that she couldn't stand the train trip to Harper and Dad has told me a thousand times that he didn't care where he was buried. Furthermore, mother wishes to make Colorado her home.....feels that five of we boys will always be here and she wants the grave where she can tend it and visit it.

Before I married this past June, Mildred and I told mother and Dad that the home was paid for and was theirs for so long as they should live. We had intended building ourselves, but that, of course, is impossible now. Furthermore, she has the sander business here and that will run around $100.00 per month net and she wants to be here, although we take care of it for them.

Dad's life insurance had all expired, but John and I were carrying State Compensation Insurance on Dad and while I'm not sure just what the benefits will be she is financially well provided for.

We are buying cemetary lots here and were able to secure a concrete vault. We are having services tomorrow afternoon at 4:00 and will have the grave-side services and interment after we have had a chance to hear from Bob, Dick and Ben.

We have moved heaven and earth toget them home. Contacted both Colorado Senators and one congressman. This afternoon the Red Cross called both Italy and France via trans-atlantic phone. I feel sure that they will be here next week if transportation is available.

Dad hasn't been working much since May 15th. He has gardened .....worked around the place (we had 3 acres) and helped stack lumber out at the planer. He hasn't been coming to the yard at all.....frankly, I believe that he has been here only once in the past two weeks.

We have been keeping beer all summer and he enjoys that a lot. He was to have gotten his new teeth Thursday. Had his lowers pulled and a partial upper plate. Has griped all summer that he couldn't eat steak and roasting ears.

His one big worry was the three boys in the army and if any of you folks write mother try try to offer some condolence that he couldn't have lived until Bob and Dick at least, got home. They had planned so big on seeing each other. Personally, I've lost the greatest Dad a man ever had. At Cherokee, we made money entirely on his vast personal friendship. I merely hung around and took care of the business he brought in. It was sufficient to lay a vast ground-work out here. We just got out of debt.....got a nice home paid for and then he had only two months to enjoy it.....that is with the knowledge that it was ours.

A letter like this is so hard to start-----so very hard to stop. For Aunt Ida, Aunt Louie, Uncle John't.....Aunt Abbie .....I grieve particularly. Please believe that we used our very best judgment in having burial here. I almost insisted on Harper, bacause I thot mother might desire it that way and not feel that she could afford it from a money angle. However, that was not the reason at all.....merely, that she wants to continue here and I can see her viewpoint.

Dad had so many friends back there. I particularly hate it that it will be impossible for them to pay their last respects. However, there have been many flowers, calls, and telegrams. If only he could have seen Bob, Dick and Ben I'm sure that he would have had no regrets. Some things can't be changed..... likewise they cannot be explained.....only a superrior being.

We certainly appreciate your kind thots and sympathy. Please come and see us whenever you can.

May god bless us all,

Lew Burkey